

## ***Many applaud president's effort to reach out to both political parties***

By Jessica Anderson, The Baltimore Sun

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Members of Maryland's congressional delegation endorsed the president's call Tuesday night to work across party lines to improve education, facilitate innovation and reduce the deficit.

"Now is the time for both sides and both houses of Congress — Democrats and Republicans — to forge a principled compromise that gets the job done. If we make the hard choices now to rein in our deficits, we can make the investments we need to win the future," Obama said in his State of the Union address before the 112th Congress, with House Speaker John Boehner and Vice President Joe Biden behind him.

"He challenged all of us to come together as Americans," said Rep. C.A. Dutch Ruppersberger, a Baltimore County Democrat, mentioning how the president opened his speech talking about the need for a bipartisan effort following the shootings in Tucson, which kept Rep. Gabrielle Giffords from attending the speech. She and 12 others were wounded and six were killed Jan. 8.

Ruppersberger said he thought Obama's speech was "very positive." He applauded the president's stressing education at a time when other programs might be cut, saying that some areas will have to sacrifice.

Rep. John Sarbanes, also a Baltimore County Democrat, said Obama "hit the right themes," that Americans have it in them to take the challenge to succeed in the future.

Sarbanes said that the president addressed key issues, including ways to create jobs by building better, improved infrastructure, but that the president made certain to address one of the nation's greatest concerns: the deficit.

Newcomer to Congress Rep. Andy Harris, a Baltimore County Republican, said he was glad the president started talking about debt reduction and a spending freeze, but he criticized Obama for not initiating those steps sooner.

Harris said he wished the president "would've actually talked about cutting spending" and had been more specific about how he would create jobs. He praised the president for bringing up tort reform.

Harris, a part of the wave of the new Republican-majority House from the November midterm elections, agreed that the tone in the chambers was one of compromise and willingness to work together.

"I look forward to seeing his proposals," Harris said.

Sen. Benjamin L. Cardin, a Democrat, also commented on the president's tone, saying Obama "addressed issues in a very nonpartisan tone."

Cardin said he was especially taken by the president's mention of the Soviet satellite Sputnik, saying that "there are areas where we are falling behind" in education and technology. He said the speech was "the right vision for America," adding that the speech was "not emotional, but factual."

"We can lead the world, but we have to work for it," Cardin said. "Let's get to work."

Rep. Steny H. Hoyer of Southern Maryland — the No. 2 Democrat in the House — said in a statement that the president delivered a "compelling vision" of how team work can address the country's challenges. "While our economy is on the road back to health, we know we still have a long way to go — and tonight, the president discussed a strategy for getting us there," he said.

Rep. Elijah E. Cummings' statement credited the previous Congress with helping the economy but noted that without innovation and improvements in the education system, as pointed out by the president, "the state of our union will not be strengthened."

Already on Tuesday, politicians were making an effort to present a united front by choosing to do away with the tradition of sitting strictly with their own political party — Republicans on one side and Democrats on another.

The Maryland pairings included Democratic Sen. Barbara A. Mikulski and Republican Sen. Lisa Murkowski of Alaska; Democratic Rep. Elijah E. Cummings of Baltimore and Republican Rep. Paul Gosar of Arizona and Republican Rep. Andy Harris and Rep. C.A. Dutch Ruppersberger, a Baltimore County Democrat.

Rep. Roscoe Bartlett of Western Maryland, a member of the conservative Republican Study Committee and the new Tea Party Caucus, sat with Democratic former Speaker Nancy Pelosi, the House Republicans' No. 1 target in the midterm elections.